2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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a. Looking on the newly filled grave

[facing p.21]

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, Mu Ngonde

maids and always carries a mat or cloth to screen her face from her father and his contemporaries, her father's full sisters, her older brothers,[1] and her 'mothers-in-law' (*abakamwana*).[2] These she must fear and respect (*akutila*) and so avoid. Her father-in-law and his brothers she avoids altogether from the time of her engagement, or at least after she has reached the age of 8 or 9. Her companions do not *akutila* with her, though those of them who are already betrothed will, of course, avoid their own fathers-in-law.

During the period of seclusion the girls have two specific tasks: to weave the fine mats used as beds, and to fetch firewood. Every bride should take to her husband's home at least one fine mat (*akuyasa*) which she has made herself, as well as several coarse ones (*imisefu*),[3] and weaving a fine mat is a lengthy task, occupying a skilful woman a month. Each girl weaves for herself, but the firewood that each must fetch is stacked in the bride's mother's loft. The bride also occupies herself hammering out bark-cloth, pleating it for the strip worn between the legs, and decorating bark-cloth belts (*nide* plate 5), so that she may have the fresh ones required during the ritual, and a supply to take with her to her husband's; but this work is not emphasized as an obligation: rather it is a recreation. Women take great pride in the decoration of their belts—we watched several brides making them and handing them round for the admiration of their fellows. The maids may work in the fields if required to do so, but the bride herself does not, and 'she gets fat because she does not have much work to do'. The whole ritual normally lasts about three months, but if, for some reason such as a pressing need to go out to work, the husband is in a hurry for its completion, various acts may be telescoped. The time-table depends primarily on when the marriage-cattle and food for the various feasts are ready.

From the time of first menstruation until she does it ritually, a bride should neither wash nor oil herself. The prohibition is felt to be a very onerous one and some girls now break it, but women said 'in the old days we did not wash'. 'Girls nowadays are more cunning. We were afraid.'

[1] Some informants denied that she avoided father's sisters or brothers. Others insisted that she must avoid them because 'brothers are fathers, and father's full sisters are father'.

[2] I.e. her husband's own mother and other women he calls mother. In this account the plural 'mothers' indicates own and classificatory mothers.

[3] Nyakyusa beds are made of layers of mats laid on rollers between two logs or bread and fleas. One chief's bed we saw was made up of sixty-eight mats.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

notwithstanding the accident, accepted the inevitable, and were ferried safely across.

For the rest, the variety of woodwork includes carved walking-sticks, with straight, knobbed, or bent handles; chairs, stools, pillows, musical instruments, and wooden platters. In the Bundali district remarkably good Rurkee chairs are made on the European pattern, with perfectly smoothed spars, and perfectly burned-out holes for fitting the parts together. The one in my possession might quite well have been made in a carpenter's shop, but the only tools used were an axe and a knife, and a piece of iron for boring the holes. Toothed hair ornaments and small wooden dolls represent the finer work; and bamboo cups are decorated with pleasing patterns in poker work.

More important than the woodwork is the ancient craft of the potter. There is, of course, no potter's wheel, everything, from the immense pots, three feet high, down to the smallest eating dish, being formed by hand, built up, as regards the larger ones, by successive layers of clay, and finally hardened, after drying in the sun, by being put on a fire, while another fire is kindled inside. There is a great variety of pots, both in shape and in size. The very large ones are used for storing grain or flour; and some Europeans employ them for storing water. A well-stocked house will have up to twenty pots, for water carrying, for cooking porridge, fish, beans, flesh; and special ones are kept for beer making and drinking. The best clay is found at the north end of the lake, and from there

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F3017 Ngonde F3017
Nyakyusa

769 796 pumpkin leaves were ready to eat, an elaborate first-fruit ceremony was formerly carried out. The new season's food was offered first by the nobles of Ngonde in the grave of the previous Kyungu, the one who had last died.

[778] The great chiefs would do so next, each at his own sacred grove (the grave of his own predecessor in the title). And after them everyone, both chiefs and people, each at his father's grave. All offered first fruits to their own shades. And finally they would themselves eat, each with his chief wife. But they would not eat beforehand for fear of angering the shades.

693 794 [721] In time of tribal war also the Kyungu and nobles of Ngonde led the people in prayer. All chiefs and nobles were summoned from the plain and the great ones entered the Kyungu's house to receive their instructions:

[722] When he had finished speaking he would tell them to go and pray. So they would leave his house and gather all together, all the chiefs, and the other men, and pray. The premier noble of Ngonde would begin asking each of the sacred graves of the Kyungus in turn to bless them in the fight. And then the great chiefs would pray after him.

This organization of religious ritual in the Ngonde plain was both a factor of and itself determined by the general political structure. Many details of the secular power of Mbande and of the lower authorities were dependent upon their religious functions, but the reverse is equally true. Among the Nyakyusa, where the hierarchy of chiefs had scarcely any secular significance, the organization of religious ritual was far less elaborate. Cattle [782] were sent to Lubaga by the chiefs to be sacrificed for rain and health; but the 'clearing out of the ashes' was done by each chiefdom separately; there was no general first-fruits ritual at all; while, as war was never waged on a tribal basis, prayers and sacrifices for military success were always undertaken by each warring chiefdom alone.

693 789 [352] [293] [778] The majesty (*ubukuye*) of the Kyungu was cultivated in a variety of ways. He smeared himself with ointment made from lion fat, and his bed was built up with elephant tusks and lion pelts. He was enthroned on the sacred iron stool called Kinumbi, he had a spear, Kamisa, and Mulima, a porous piece of iron 'like a mouth organ' used to make rain, all handed down from the first Kyungu. His zebra tails, set with medicines in horn handles, were waved in

12: Blegvad E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

by horizontal bamboo joists, at right angles to the principal beams of the ceiling. This ceiling never covers the entire room, but only the greater part, and always the part directly above the hearth. Up here firewood is placed to dry. A fine black basket is hung from the ceiling above the fire. Access to the loft is by means of a ladder. 342. [372]

When you read reports by the 'first' Europeans on these people and their houses, they always refer to a round house with curving walls and a conical roof. Merensky (1894) mentions and illustrates such a house (pages 141 et seq.). Fülleborn (1906) mentions and illustrates several houses (Text Volume pages 376 et seq., and Atlas, plates 64-65). The inner surface of the walls of the house was decorated with patterns impressed into the mud layer which covers the bamboo poles. The three stones that form the hearth are shown, and also the bed behind a low permanent partition wall. These were exceptionally fine houses with beautiful, decorated and painted doors. The entrance had relief ornaments, often of coloured clay. Fülleborn notes that the round houses are the dwellings of married people. [353]

There is no doubt that the round house is the original type of dwelling. In 1935, I saw no round houses like the ones described by the above scholars, but I know that formerly they were often seen, at least as late as 1930. Professor Monica Wilson of Cape Town has told me that she saw them everywhere in 1932, but that during a visit to the district in 1935 she found only one single house of this type, in the village of Mwaipa. 178 342

At the time of my visit, round houses could be seen, but not the type having walls inclining inwards near the ground, and they were not by far so imposing as the houses mentioned above; and there were not many of them. I had the opportunity to make drawings of three houses, all occupied by old people. 342.

The round house is called an isinga. In one of these isinga there lived an old man whose wife, Mafita, lived across the courtyard in a rectangular hut of the old Nyakyusa type (see infra). The husband's house was 6.5 metres cross, and was divided in halves by a fence made from sticks. One half was where the man lived; it had one bed for him, and one for his grandchildren, who would come to visit him, now and then. Near the wall were two iron chests; also, a board had been hung at the wall as a rack for the chickens. A hen's nest, a small wicker basket, was placed about 3 ft. above the floor in the formation of a few un-arranged sticks. These hen's nests are seen in all houses. The ceiling was supported by seven upright posts, seemingly placed entirely at random. The outer side of the roof was strengthened by eight circular-running fastens of bamboo. In the centre, a heavy log (not bamboo) reached up to the pointed top of the roof. [342] [353] [352] [231]

The other half of the house was reserved for the cattle, there were and two calves; there were five posts to which the cattle were tied at night. [233]

The house had an outer door at each end, but there was no passage from the man's half to that of the cattle.

12: Diagaard E-5 (1955) 1962 F917 Ngonde F917
Nyakyusa

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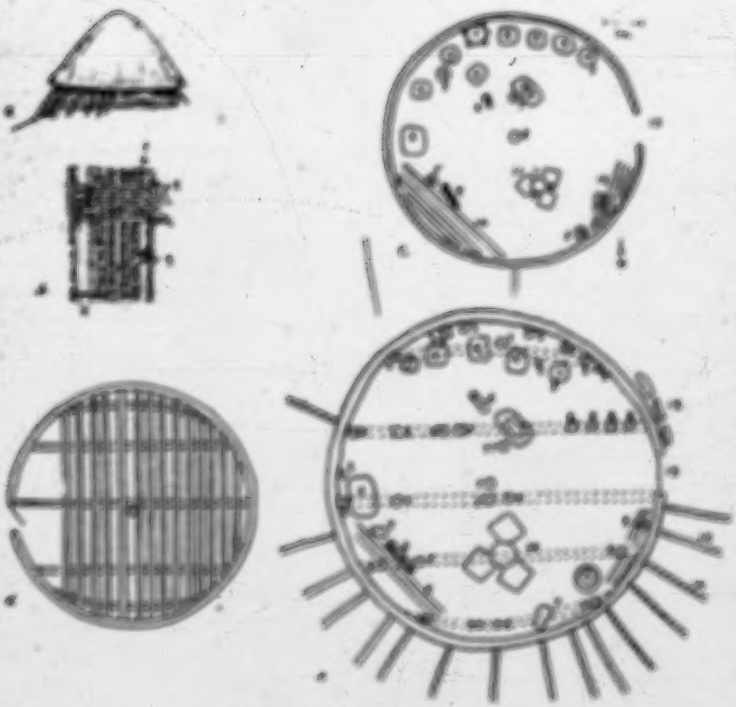

Lungu. Mafisha's house or Hide near the Rungwe mission station.

a. Elevation showing burrowing goats; to the right of the door is material for thatching.—b. Detail of wall. 1, cow's horn; 2, bark fiber for winding round poles; 3, notch made in bamboo pole that was crushed; 4, bamboo.—c. Plan of house showing furnishings and utensils on the floor, but not the sticks that were lying everywhere (see plate 1). 1, hen's nest; 2, basket; 3, jar; 4, newly made basket; 5, calabash; 6, broom; 7, mill-stone and grinder; 8, *crocus* pot (here were a couple of bananas for food); 9, sleeping mat; 10, small under-ceiling from sticks and rags(hen, for small things; 11, hearth; 12, heap of rubbish, a kind of grass which looks much like thin bamboo.—d. Cross-section at ceiling level showing *crocus* pot, beams, and joists on which the sticks are placed; the *crocus* pot reaches right up to the top of the roof.—e. Plan of house showing beams of the ceiling (dotted lines, cf. d). 1, *crocus* pot; 2, other beam-carrying pots; 3, hen's nest; 4, basket; 5, calabash; 6, broom; 7, calabash; 8, sleeping mat; 9, small under-ceiling, repository for small things; 10, hearth from door stones; 11, mill-stone and small grinder; 12, thatching material; 13, door; 14, outside barricade.

342. The round house was standing on somewhat higher ground than the surrounding barracks; half the house was buttressed by wooden posts, possibly because the ground was a bit lower there. The walls were from bamboo poles,

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 F7017 Ngonde F7017
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Fig. 1. Tafwete's house at Rungwe, Sept. 1955.

a. Elevation, showing doorway with walls drawn too thick; the door itself has been left out.—b. Outside detail of wall showing split cross-battens; red clay calm between poles.—c. Plan. 1, jars; 2, shelves; 3, shields etc. (on shields is a flat basket used as a plate); 4, small window; 5, centre post; 6, hearth; 7, water jar; 8, spare bed; 9, banana fibre; 10, bird's nest; 11, sticks; 12, sticks for kitchen utensils; 13, door; 14, post for locking device; 15, corn grinding trough; 16, basket with bananas; 17, grain; 18, tins; 19, shrouds, mat for collecting flour from grinding stone; 20, bamboo ladder; 21, bed of the women; 22, mat.—d. Cross-section of bamboo ceiling, with firewood for drying, and a few baskets below.

connected near the ground with two fore arms which easily fitted into the hollow of the bamboos. Between these two fore arms, the liquid manure from the cow-house could escape—much to the benefit of the nearby bananas.

The other things belonged to the old widow, Tafwete. She lived alone in her house. The walls were bamboos, up to 3 cm in diameter. From the inside, the space between the poles had been filled with 3-5 cm large cubs of red clay. Round the outside were four horizontal bands of split bamboos.

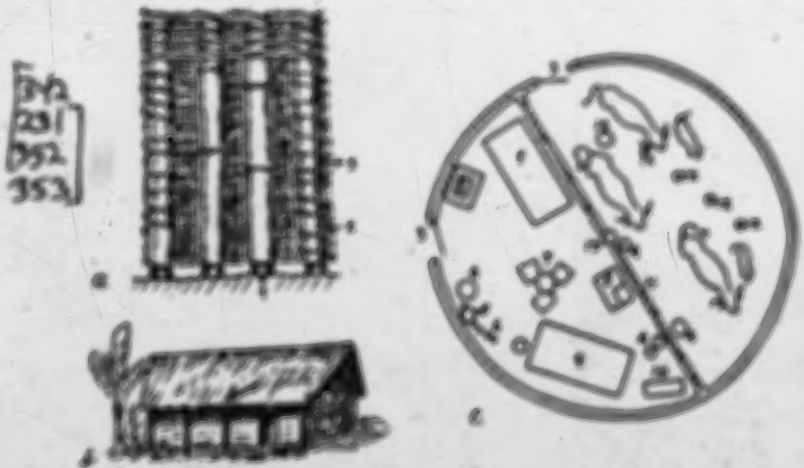
This house, too, was 6.3 metres in diameter, and it was divided into two equal [353]

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17 Nyakyusa

392 353 parts. The partition wall was bamboo and mud. A doorway gave on to the inner part, where Tufwene had her bed.

394 There were two hearths, one in each room. The front one was not used. In the outer room was a bed for guests—a common feature of all houses. Tufwene was thought to be well off, and she had plenty of carrying slings, used by the 482 women when they carry loads, often very heavy, on their heads. The inner room was used for stores, including a number of earthen jars. She had three very fine, ● 352 large mats. I saw them outside in the sun, but their usual place was no doubt in the outer room, which had the character of a workroom. Here were the large 402 wooden mortar and its long pestle; also the grinding stone and in a corner the small mat, the ulupemo, which is used to take up the newly ground flour. There 417 was also the ladder, used for climbing down forward from the loft; you could see 415 the hen's nest, and the large water jar with its painted bottom placed on three stones.

408 The third image belonged to an eighty-year-old woman whose husband had [707] died. She told me how every day she would fill a fine, decorated bamboo mug [651] with milk for him! These mugs, seen in all the houses, mostly have geometrical



Houses belonging to Maka Ulimwawa and her husband.

a. Detail of image, outer wall. c, one fore arm joined to bamboo pole—note aperture for liquid manure; e, bamboo pole with plaited fibre windings; g, split bamboos.—b, Maka's dukapo. —c. Plan of image. c, bed of the man; e, iron sheets for guardsmen; g, door; g, posts supporting ceiling; g, hen's nest; f, fires and posts for the outer rooms; g, hearth; f, stools; g, bed of the grandchildren; ee, rows from hollowed out trunk; rr, low partitions; ss, posts for tying cattle; ry, crown pole to top of roof.

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 F'017 Ngonde F'017
Nyakyusa

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gateway burned into the bamboo; they are hung upside down so the dust will not settle in them. The bosom is the natural partition of the bamboo cane.

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The house was standing on high, slightly sloping ground, and like the first mentioned house it was buttressed by a great number of thick branches. Incidentally, it seemed to be very old and rickety. Inside, there were a great many posts supporting the horizontal bamboo ceiling and the eaves of forecourt. All posts were bifurcated and held the beams solidly in place. The diameter of the house was the usual 4.5 metres, but in this case there was no inner partition. As this woman was very poor, she had no bed, but slept on a mat on the floor. Only very rarely is there no bed in the houses; I remember having seen this only three times.

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The hearth was the usual type: three decorated square stones, rising to a height of 30 cm above the floor, but being sunk 30 cm into the ground. Here they were partitioned on one side, to ensure that the centre post would not catch fire, and to make for easy escape of the smoke through the doorway. None of the houses have other means of smoke outlet.

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Alongside the wall were calabashes, jars, and baskets; essential for the baskets, and a little away from the wall, the large millstone and its uppermost smaller grinding stone. A hen's nest was not missing either. Along one side was fixed a small under-ceiling for the storage of small things. Two or three bananas, meant to be her next meal, were lying on the floor near one of the posts. From the left she reached down a rabbit's in which she had been carrying her child. Its inside was of a reddish colour.

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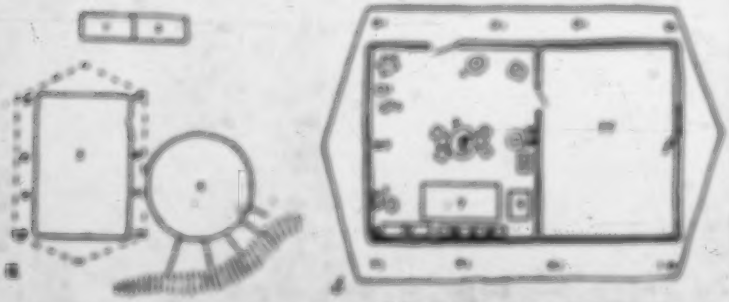
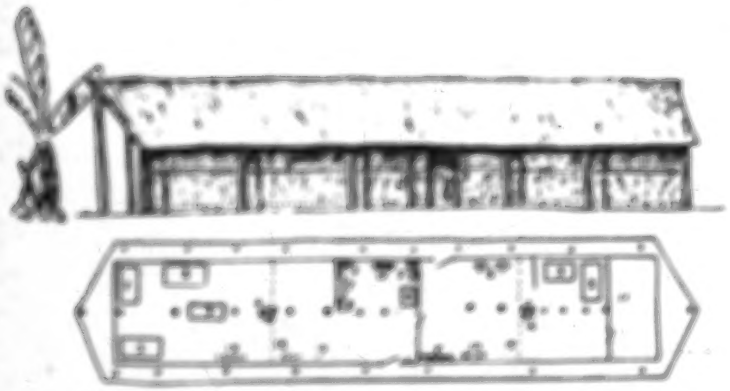


a. Site plan of Mulla Ulleyehaye's houses. 1, forecourt; 2, drying-racks for crops; 3, Mulla's dikaga with roof supports along sides; 4, crops belonging to Mulla's husband, with buttresses at low ground.—b. Plan of Mulla's dikaga (layout) (window in back room). 1, hen's nest; 2, dikala (mud); 3, posts (those going up to ridge of roof are filled in); 4, large basket; 5, basket; 6, clay base round main posts; 7, Mulla's bed; 8, chair; 9, wooden chest; 10, table; 11, back room, having bamboo ceiling carried by bamboo cross beam (between posts marked 3); the room is used for storing clothes, etc.; 12, shelves.

12: Biegaard E-5 (1953) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



An dakaga in the village of Kiwandiba, the district of Rungwajo, belonging to a man with two wives. The rooms have bamboo ceilings from dotted lines to ridge-pole. Pens reaching to ridge of roof are filled in. 1, husband's bed; 2, wife's bed; 3, child's bed; 4, hearth; 5, bread ovens; 6, water jar; 7, mat; 8, ladder; 9, table; 10, stools; 11, storerooms; 12, doored lean-to for initiation of ceilings; 13, small objects; 14, working material; 15, sleeping mat.

leave. On page 332, he reports how the boys, when 7 or 10 years old, will leave their parents' house to live in long, rectangular cookhouse-like houses big or small, in a special youngsters' quarter at the far end of the village. On page 338 he writes: In many cases you do not know for certain whether you are dealing with a youngsters' house or a cookhouse—for the cattle may well be kept in these houses—or the herdsmen may sleep in the cookhouses. However, this mostly holds true of the low-lying Konde country, while on the other hand, in the high country, the cattle is usually kept in the dwelling houses. On pages 331 and 332, he relates how the cattle is tied up goes at night, and he shows a picture of a cookhouse.

He also relates (on page 336) to the use of the rectangular house for married men besides the boys. The difference is seen in the fact that these houses are not roughcast with mud, as this work is the province of women. Finally, he reports that, during the last few years of his stay in the Konde country, he saw Konde houses being built under increasing influence of the coastal culture, in imitation of the Swahili houses. They were roughcast with mud inside and out, and had a verandah supported by posts.

In 1953, many dakagas could be seen. Some were for the cattle, but most were dwelling houses for married people. Boys aged 7–10 and upwards until the marriageable age lived in cookhouse boys' houses, the material of which was not bamboo, but a thinner grass, resembling bamboo very much. These houses stood

12: Blegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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342 solitary or in a row some distance from the other houses of the village. They were never roughcast with mud).

Nearly all the ilidago had a post-supported verandah. I measured up and drew sketches of two houses of this type, one belonging to the above-mentioned woman called Malia, whose husband lived next door in an isinga. She was a Christian—actually a church-elder. On the outside of her bamboo-framed, mud-roughcast wall, she had drawn a church in yellow, red, and black colours, and below she had written the word *kanisa* (church). Apart from a house near Lake Nyasa, of which I took a photograph and which had very modernistic and drastic drawings on its outside wall (crocodiles, a man and his bicycle, a man with his firearm), it is the only instance in which I saw any kind of coloured decoration on a house. Besides impressed patterns in clay on hearth and floor, I saw no decorations on the inside or outside of houses, except fine patterns in the outside wickerwork of the wall.

342 In this house, approximately 8 metres long, there were two vertical supporting posts, reaching to the very ridge of the roof, where presumably they were joined to the ridge beam. However, the beam could not be seen.

354 The hearth was peculiar in that it consisted of two pairs of hearthstones near a clay base that surrounded a supporting post and a shorter post. Thus two hearths were available, at the same time serving as fire-proofing to the posts. Though Malia was a single woman, the house had two hearths. You might think that she had seen a stove and had found that two cooking places would be useful. I saw this arrangement in one more place, in the house of a widow, who—by the way—was also a Christian.

353 A space nearly half the size of the house was partitioned off, the half-wall having a doorway. This room was for stores only, clothes etc.; it had a barred window. Besides the hearths, the living-room had hen's nests, stools, baskets, Malia's bed (2 m by 1 m), table, wooden shelves, boxes, and a chest. These last-mentioned objects she had had no difficulty in obtaining from the neighbouring joiner's workshop belonging to the mission.

342 The other ilidago is from quite a different district, that of Rungwanda. It was a very long house, as often seen in this locality, 26 metres long. I was told that

The type of house called ilumba, or isinga.

12: Blegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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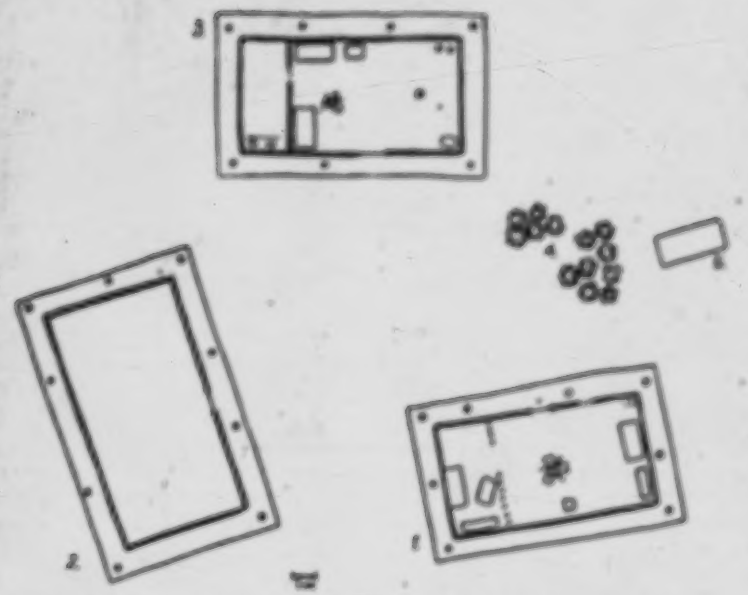

Three houses belonging to one family, situated round a common courtyard; the doors open on to the yard. The village street is along the back of the house at top. 1, Sarlina's house; 2, Bala's house; 3, Idina's house; 4, banana plants; 5, fowl-coop.

houses existed which were 60 metres in length. It had the same width as Malia's house, approximately 5 metres. The roof was supported by posts along the sides and at the gables.

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Two women lived in this house, both married to the same man. Consequently, there were two hearths, the stones of which were cylindrical-conical, broadening slightly at the top. All were decorated. Each woman had her part of the house, both with an outer door, and further there was a door, slightly narrower, between the two parts, and a fourth door to a store-room. No less than twelve posts supported the roof, all reaching to the ridge. The two parts were a bit unequal in size; nearly half of each had the well-known loft for firewood, etc. One part contained beds for the woman and her husband (one bed had two straw mats). The children had two beds. The husband had still another house, a short distance away at the foot of a hill, they said. I did not see it. The other woman's room held her bed and a cot.

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The hearths of both rooms were placed in the centres, between two upright posts. Utensils and furnishings did not differ much from the usual: hen's nests,

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12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

two water jars, baskets, stools, a ladder leading to the loft, and a table. The rooms were large and spacious, 5 m by 14 m, and in two places low partitions were used to effect a sub-division of the rooms. One may well wonder at the great length of these houses, but probably it is quite true what is said, that, when—in 1891—the Germans took charge of the region and imposed a tax on houses, the Nyakyusa men made their women move in under their own roofs—only at the same time extending the houses, using the technique they already knew from the cowhouses.

Fülleborn reports on this payment of taxes, and finds it reasonable enough, because, he says, "it favors in the people an understanding of work and discipline," and of the house tax he says, "it works to abolish polygamy, since every woman, following the traditions of her country, has her own house, for which her husband must pay the tax."

But the Banyakyusa seems to have adapted themselves to the new law and have moved their wives in the very long houses, thus escaping part of the taxes....

The third type of house was a rectangular house with a hipped roof. This type is called *ilema*, which means tent. It was also called *isimu*, the meaning of which I have not been able to ascertain; maybe it means chicken-house, to which it bears much likeness.

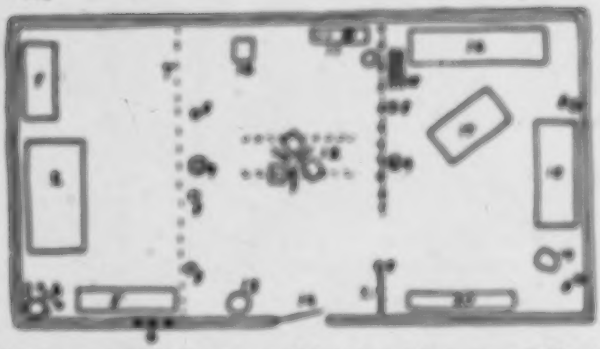
This is the modern house-type to which Fülleborn may be referring when he talks about rectangular houses, "... the very rare instances where a hipped roof is seen ...," (page 371).

According to statements made by people who have lived in the district for a third of a century, this type of house is thought to have come from the south some 40 years ago. I have not visited the Ngonde who live farther south, but Sir Harry Johnston (1897) depicts a group of people called "Wankonde (North Nyasa)" in front of a house which looks very much like the modern *ilema* of the Banyakyusa. It seems therefore reasonable to assume that the roof-construction design of the Ngonde has now reached the district of the Banyakyusa. Johnston also informs us that the rectangular type is not actually the original type in East Africa, but that it was probably introduced by the Arabs.

This *ilema* or *isimu* is shorter than the long *ikhaga*; seldom more than 11 metres in length. But its interior design does not differ. For instance, this holds true of the placing of the hearth, of the equal distance between posts supporting the roof, of the bamboo ceiling covering about half the room, of half-partitions from bamboo and in some cases mud, of store-rooms in the far end of the house, accessible through an inner door.

"In an *ilema* I have never seen more than one hearth, which means that the house is inhabited by one woman. A house in the village of Kilasa presented an example of the peculiar tradition of the people of the Highlands, viz. the tying of the cattle to posts in the dwelling-houses. My drawings are all from the Highlands, where, in the *ikhaga*, as also noted by Fülleborn, the same tradition is

12: Sinclair E-5 (1955) 1962 F917 Ngonde F917
Nyakyusa



Sarbua's house. 1, cupboard with shelves; 2, children's bed; 3, boy's mat; 4, ladder; 5, room; 6, barred window; 7, from dotted line towards the right is the bamboo ceiling; 8, from here four 3 horizontal bamboo sticks on which the bamboo ceiling is supported; 9, Post supporting roof; 10, chair; 11, low shelf with two bamboo jars and a water jar; 12, hearth with three hearthstones and sticks under ceiling for carrying the fire basket, and corn-cobs hung up to dry, etc.; 13, love jar; 14, door; 15, room behind the low partition; 16, shelf for domestic utensils; 17, child's bed; 18, Sarbua's bed; 19, baskets; 20, domestic utensils; 21, low partition between rooms.

found. In the front part of the Kilesia house, serving as an entrance room, were four posts called *ikingi*, to which two cows were tied at night.

This part, which we may call the *vestibulum*, also housed hen's nests, the corn, and the mortar to be used for maize, etc.

The hearth, consisting of one square and two round hearthstones, was placed in the centre of the living-room part. Here were also water jars and the woman's bed. This means that even if this type of house had a roof of a different shape and was always provided with a verandah with posts supporting its roof, the interior was really designed on the same lines as the short *dikaga*, but it was meant to house only one woman, or one man, as we shall see below.

We may imagine that one of the reasons why the type of roof was changed, was the weakness of the pointed roof of the *dikaga*. It could often be seen to have a tendency to fall in, and had to be supported by a post. Even in Fülleborn's illustrations, e.g. plate 64 *c*, a kind of reinforcement can be seen at the edge of the roof. No doubt the roof of the *ilamo* does not suffer to the same extent from this flaw.

New houses were being built to this design, and I suppose that a little more than half the number of the houses were of the *dikaga* type, and a little than half the *ilamo*.

In the village of Ilolo, I surveyed three houses belonging to one family, a

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 F917 Ngonde F917 Nyakyusa

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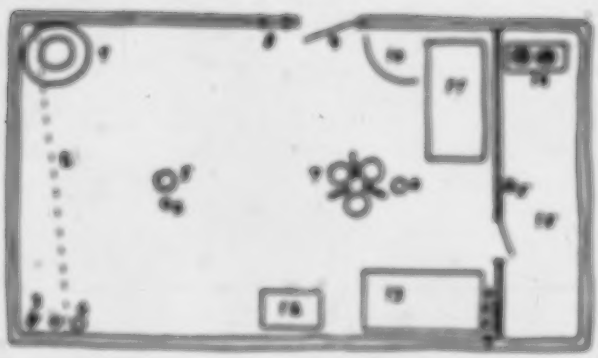


Mina's house. 1, basket; 2, clothes-line; 3, broom; 4, jar, in the back room on low shelf; 5, posts supporting roof; 6, small dimension bamboo poles, supports for the ceiling; 7, hearth with three round fireplaces; 8, shuttered opening through which the bull may be watched; 9, door; 10, entrance for food; 11, spare bed; 12, table; 13, Mina's bed; 14, shelf for jars; 15, door-room behind mud wall with door.

[344] man and his two wives. The houses were grouped round a common courtyard, the doors giving upon this space and not on the nearby village thoroughfare.

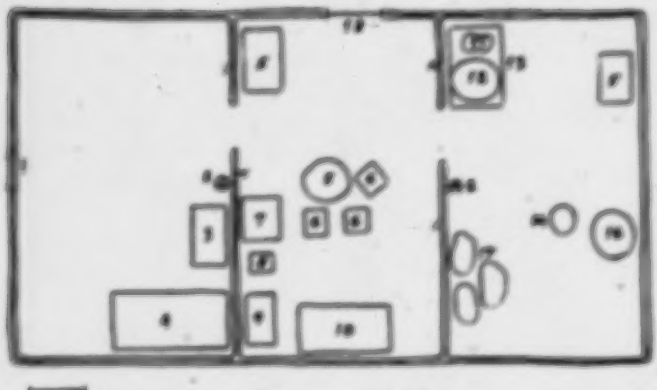
The three houses here the names of Isilika's house, Mina's house, and Baba's house. The elder wife, Isilika, had several minor children, who slept either near her own bed or in the living area. She owned furnishings as modern as a chair and a cupboard with shelves, besides the usual objects in these houses, baskets, bamboo mugs, hen's nest and roost, ladder and water jars. She also had an earthen-

352 177 [415 273] ware beer jar which, one day when I called on her, was standing on the fire, nearly making the fresh beer over. She was preparing beer for her husband's friends, who had just dropped in.

352 [353 262] [246] The new wife, Mina, had a store-room in her house, and there was also a large heap of cassava, meant for food. As often seen in these houses, she had also a guest bed. She had a number of jars and baskets, but no hen's nest. Straight across the room she had suspended a line on which she put her clothes. Such an arrangement was often used, especially by the herbalists; they had a line for their skins. Clothes-hangers were not in use. You just threw your clothes across the line. A wardrobe was never seen.

342 352 The interior of Baba's house presented a peculiar picture. It was divided into three rooms, a living-area in the middle; at one side the bed-room, at the other a store-room. The bed-room had only one bed and a wooden chest. There was no hearth in the living-room—for the husband had his meals prepared by one of his wives. But there was a true accumulation of tables, chairs, suitcases, and a

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



Baba's house. 1, barred window; 2, posts supporting roof; 3, wooden chest; 4, Baba's bed; 5, table; 6, chair; 7, cupboard; 8, chair with three suitcases; 9, suitcase; 10, table with books; dotted, 11, bag; 12, large basket, *dishe*; 13, low stand for 11 and 12; 14, millet jars; 15, low partitions; 16, *dishe* in which the millet is washed; 17, *chest* in bags.

cupboard. This seemed very strange and a bit disorderly. On a chair were three suitcases on top of each other.

It was interesting to see, in the store-room, the very crops that belong to the 251
man, viz. rice and millet, the most valuable produce. The rice was in bags, and [431
it is quite probable that this man had bought it from the districts near Lake 243]
Nyasa, where it thrives well. On higher ground, rice cannot be cultivated.

The millet was contained in a basket, 1 m in height, 55 cm broad at the [415]
bottom, and narrower, 35 cm, at the top.

Further, there was a large, beautiful earthenware jar, which he had bought. This was intended for the millet. And there was also a cylindrical container for the washing of the millet when it was brought home from the field. This vessel was 33 cm in height and 85 cm across.

All three houses had a small window with bars or shutters. 342
The inside of the houses lay in semi-darkness, as the only light is admitted [354]
through the doorway, and in some cases through the diminutive barred window. Nevertheless, the interiors give a nice impression, because of their tidiness, bright, size, and cleanness. And how cosy they are, when seen at night; the door is closed, [262]
you gather round the fire and delight in perfectly cooked rice, which is the favourite dish at this principal meal of the day.

Johnston says (1897, page 433) that the greater number of the houses are [171]
circular in their plan and very much like bee-hives in shape; their walls are wickerwork filled with mud cobs, and they have thatched roofs. He also reports

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 F317 Ngonde F317
Nyakyusa

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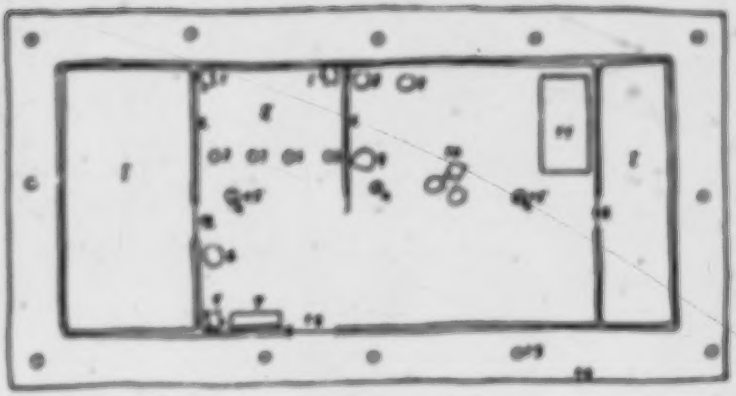

1 m

An *ilamo* from the village of Kikova. I, store-room at either end of the house; II, corners for cattle,—c, hen's nest; 2, low partitions from bamboo; 3, posts for tying two head of cattle; 4, Three posts supporting roof; 5, hen; bamboo cups, calabashes, etc., were hanging on the posts; 6, wooden mortar for maize; 7, roost from bamboo tied together; 8, water jar; 9, basket; 10, hearth consisting of two round and one square fireplaces; 11, bed of the woman; 12, door; 13, supports for the roof; 14, cows.—Outer doors from wooden boards; store-room doors from bamboo; bamboo ceiling covers area from half-way partition to the right of cow's corner on to store-room inner wall to the right.

[171] that such houses are found in Africa (a) south of the Zambesi, (b) in all of British Central Africa, (c) in all of East Africa including the Egyptian Sudan,—but not in localities where the Arab influence has introduced the oblong, rectangular building.

342 171 Now, if we look upon the eastern territories of Africa only—what great changes have taken place there since Johnston's day? The round house is being ousted under foreign influence—Arab as well as European.

If you ask a native of Africa, why he changes the plan of his house, his answer will be, that the rectangular house is easier to sub-divide and better in use—which is most probably true. When first the technique has been adopted, people in other parts of Africa will no doubt abandon the circular design and take up the rectangular.

171 342 But nevertheless, the variations in types of hut in Tanganyika are truly amazing; they range from e.g. the fine *ilamo* of the Banyakyusa,—to the rectangular *itimbe* with nearly flat, clay roof of the Vakimbu,—to the round bee-hives of the Batutsi, which may be built in no time on a frame-work of branches and covered with

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 F7617 Ngonde F7617
Nyakyusa

After these admonitions, the mats which the girl had manufactured were inspected. During this examination it was told her that a wife should be seen in the possession of as many beautiful mats as possible, made by her for herself and for her husband. Should the girl reveal such conduct as a wife, ubuzengelefu (happiness) would be in her hut.

When the proper ceremony seemed to have come to an end, another discussion followed. The girl had told the umyago, during the above mentioned admonition, that her parents also sometimes exchanged angry words. Therefore, a new discussion between the father and the mother arose, in which also the umyago was the "speaker", but the other participants of the ceremony also shared in it, and the discussion too became at times heated. Still, after about 15 minutes, it suddenly came to an end, and the matter in dispute was declared settled. With this the whole ceremony ended.

8. One day I asked the chief for permission to visit his huts. He dwelt in a rectangular hut (ikibaga). A very beautiful ikitara (bed) was in the main room, composed of many sleeping mats (ubuleti, pl. imileti) and of big round wooden blocks (sections of a tree-trunk), one at the head and a smaller one at the foot of the bed. Each of the four fine mats which lay uppermost had a special name. All the mats rested on sticks of reed laid across beams lying on smaller poles on the floor[6]. These mats were naturally of nearly the same height as the wooden block which formed the head part of the ikitara. In some other old-fashioned and better houses in Nyakyusa villages, similar beds were to be seen, but generally the bedsteads are much more simple.

One of the most important permissions granted me by the chief was to enter the "store room", connected with his main room by a door. The objects to be seen here were the same as those to be found in other huts or store-rooms, e. g. the big ifitaba (baskets) for storing grain, up to four feet high, smeared over with cow-dung and clay, and smaller baskets for different purposes. In one corner hung different kinds of dancing fans (urukope, sg.) made of hairs from the tails of bulls, with fine handles of horn. In the dark opposite corner of the same wall there seemed to hang a similar object, but it was wrapped in banana bast. This was the real sign of the chief's dignity, the symbol of his authority and power, named ubusuipula. A long discussion was needed to induce the chief to unveil it. Only by constantly consulting by glances the present amafumu the chief slowly unveiled it. He told us that

[6] Cf. Fülleborn, p. 381.

[6] Reminiscence I, 1

14:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FNG7 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the figures. Also bicycles, aeroplanes, motor-cars and other striking objects of the European civilisation are to be found represented and concentric white circles adjacent to these drawings or paintings.

14. Houses. Sometimes the upper portion of the framework of the rectangular houses is not fully plastered with mud leaving broad open areas or stripe horizontally or slopingly to the base-line. This may have its origin in an artistic motive and at the same time be useful in ventilating the interior of the hut. The ancient custom of the Nyakyusa to fill out the spaces between the framework of the walls with flat, oval cakes or clods of clay, supported inside the house by a second framework of bamboo (*wowanga*), has also a decorative effect.

The preparation of those oval sun-dried clay cakes is the work of the women. L. Monteith Fotheringham describes this in his "Adventures in Nyasaland" (London 1891, p. 22) with the following words: "The women make the bricks in shape like large eggs by pressing the clay between their hands." The building of the framework of the hut and the thatching of the roof is the task of the men. Nyumba means "the house" in Kinyakyusa as well as in Swahili; *ngenge* is the name for the old-fashioned hut of the Nyakyusa possessing a round baseline and a framework expanding upwards in diameter. The rectangular hut is called *ikibaga* and the smaller rectangular hut used as a store or a fowl pen, *akabaga*. It is interesting to note that there is no special word for roof in Kinyakyusa. This part of the hut or house is simply called "the above" (*ijuru*). In contrast to this fact the different poles of the roof-structure are specially named according to their position parallel to or at right angels to the ridge of the rectangular houses. *Ukutelike* means to bind the different rafters of the roof together; *imbanda* is the name for the supporting poles of the roof, and *ingenge* for the poles of the framework of the walls.

15. Outfit. Inside the house we find besides the bedsteads (*ikitara*, pl. (*fitara*) and the household utensils, the grinding-mill (*urwururo*), consisting of an upper (smaller) and a lower (broader) stone. The flour falls into a basket placed in front of the mill. Sometimes in a corner of the hut a nest (*ikitero*) for a sitting hen on top of a pole is to be found. Outside the house is a place for the sweepings (*urutapililo*). The cleaning of the interior of the houses and also the repairing of the mud plaster is the task of the women, but I saw men cleaning the space in front of the huts. At any case, it must be acknowledged that the cleanliness of a Nyakyusa village leaves little to be desired.